# SONNETS OF A PORTRAIT-PAINTER

AND OTHER SONNETS

BY

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## *FOREWORD*

*The reissuance of "Sonnets of a Portrait-Painter," eight years after its first appearance, has given me an opportunity for certain revisions. I have made many changes in the order of the sonnets, and have added a few new ones and omitted a few old ones. My aim, in all this, has been to make clearer the succession of events and emotions of which the series purports to be the history. For I have learned with surprise that many people who have read and even liked the series have remained quite unaware that these sonnets were intended to tell a connected and gradually developing story.*

*The original volume, issued in 1914 by Mitchell Kennerley, contained only the "Sonnets of a Portrait-Painter." To this I have now added four other and shorter groups. Of these, "Don Quixote," "Rue des Vents," and "The Middle Years" have appeared in The North American Review, to whose editors grateful acknowledgment is made for permission to republish.*

*A. D. F.*

*August,* 1922.

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# SONNETS OF A PORTRAIT-PAINTER

TO FLOYD DELL

## I

### APPOINTMENT

IT needs no maxims drawn from Socrates
To tell me this is madness in my blood.
Nor does what wisdom I have learned from these
Serve to abate my most unreasoned mood.
What would I of you? What gift could you bring,
That to await you in the common street
Sets all my secret ecstasy awing
Into wild regions of sublime retreat?
And if you come, you will speak common words,
Smiling as quite ten thousand others smile—
And I, poor fool, shall thrill with ghostly chords,
And with a dream my sober sense beguile.
And yet, being mad, I am not mad alone:
Alight you come! . . . That folly dwarfs my own.

## II

### WALLS OF A CITY

A thousand walls immure your days,—and yet
What are they all when, of the thousand, one
Has fallen beneath the curious urge and fret
Of you toward me, of me toward you begun?
When the first fell, I shuddered half-aghast;
The second, now a-crumble in my sight,
Predicts less thunder than the fall late past;
And I await the third with clear delight.
Mingled with all the phantoms of my fear
Are lights of utter lure. Wherefore I choose
To linger watching, though right well I bear
Knowledge that naught's to gain and much to lose,—
And that there is reserved Hell's choicest flame
For pairs of fools who play this silly game.

## III

### ENIGMA

By what confusion of things hoped or feared
Did you become the wife of him who stands
So passionless beside you? What endeared,
Some day of Spring, his pale insensate hands
So much that you desired to feel their weight? . . .
I shall go mad if I dream long of this! . . .
I wonder if a shuddering "Too late!"
Breathed from your lips when first you took his kiss? . . .
All this was years ago. Now you are done,
Both of you, with the things you feared or dreamed.
Love, that wins seldom, this time has not won;
Love's bones now glimmer where his eyes once gleamed.
You will go on, the pair of you, till death
Ordains you have drawn enough of foolish breath.

## IV

### MODERN LOVE

Fate, with devoted and incessant care,
Has showered grotesqueness round us day by day.
If we turn grave, a hurdy-gurdy's air
Is sure to rasp across the words we say.
If we stand tense on brink of perilous choices,
'Tis never where Miltonic headlands loom,
But mid the sound of comic-opera voices
Or the cheap blaze of some hair-dresser's room.
Heaven knows what moonlit turrets, hazed in bliss,
Saw Launcelot and night and Guinevere!
I only know our first impassioned kiss
Was in your cellar, rummaging for beer. . . .
Vile world! that round us has made eager claim
To smirch us with its crassness and its shame!

## V

### MINUET

With what apt ceremony, with how much grace
Of delicate wit and interchange of thought,
Do the marked pair approach the end they sought,
Each praising other's soul or book or face;
Yet in the end inevitably move
Toward a goal different than they have professed.
So love recurrently is only love,
And books and brains are less than lips and breast.
All this, I think, is well, Oh, very well!
It keeps us human though we call us wise.
No one, for being kind, has gone to hell;
And as we look into each other's eyes
We read some stories which we do not tell
That make our earth more homelike than the skies.

## VI

### UNMASKING-HOUR

Dear fellow-actor of this little stage,
We play the hackneyed parts right merrily,—
Trifle with words drawn from the poet's page,
And match our skill with cool and conscious eye.
All gracious gestures of each shining rôle
Have been the garments of our summer sport. . . .
But now, when ominous thunders shake my soul,
My reason gives of us no high report. . . .
I could not mimic Romeo had I lain
By Juliet's bier in bitter dizzy truth.
Henceforth my mouthings, choked, inept, and vain,
Will lack the light touch fitting amorous youth.
Let fall the mask! Let end the tinseled play!
Ghastly the footlights front this sudden day.

## VII

### DEEP-SEA

Over profoundest deeps, light lacy foam
Plays where the sun-world frontiers meet the sea's.
And in the deeps, slow gulf-tides have their home,
Nor is the foam-crest utterant of these.
Sail the bright surface on a summer's day,
And you shall dream along each smiling crest,
Making the waves companions of your play,
Blind to the glooms within the ocean's breast.
But when grey weather muffles up the blue,
And thundering voices rise from hollow deeps,
And coldly drooping wraith-mist out of view
Inviolate the ancient mystery keeps,—
Then would you know the secret ocean-world,
Then dive!—a plummet through vast shadows hurled.

## VIII

### COSTUME DU BAL

Why deck yourself with such unholy art
When none of all this beauty is for me?
I have two eyes; also, a living heart
That takes some impress from the things I see.
Wherefore, I say, this cruelty tonight?—
When you came forth in low-cut sweeping dress,
With flaming lips, pale shoulders, eyes alight,—
A cry of youth, a lamp of loveliness!
O what an evil in you has its nest
That my poor writhings should assuage your will!
A serpent coils within your warm white breast
And sucks the nectar of this flower of ill.
Yet . . . when I come, meet me, as thus tonight,—
With flaming lips, pale shoulders, eyes alight!

## IX

### HER PEDIGREE

Your beauty is as timeless as the earth;
All storied women live again in you:—
Yet with some element of later birth,
Some savor strange, some light troubling and new.
You were not possible until today;
For in your soul the risen Celtic wind
Breathes audible; and tragic shadows grey
From dark Norwegian winters tinge your mind.
The pulse of the world's dreamers who have been
Lemans of beauty, and grown faint thereby,—
The fierce unrest of toilers who have seen
Life as a cage of steam-shot agony,—
Have woven round you, in the burning Now,
A lure unknown to Helen's Phidian brow.

## X

### TROUBADOURS

Did not each poet amorous of old
Plead the sweet pretext of the wingèd time
To urge his lady that she be not cold
To the dissolving master of that rhyme?
I with no new importunings address
One not less proud and beautiful than they
Whose lovers breathed—"Fleet is thy loveliness;
Let not its treasure slip unused away."
Light hearts! Light words! Here in my transient Spring
Let them suffice to hide the things unsaid.
No shadow from the lonely deeps I bring.
Nay, I with gayest flowers will wreathe your head.
Here in the sun I put apart from me
Cassandra, Helen, and Persephone.

## XI

### APRIL MOMENT

Come forth! for Spring is singing in the boughs
Of every white and tremulous apple-tree.
This is the season of eternal vows;
Yet what are vows that they should solace me?
For on the winds wild loveliness is crying,
And in all flowers wild joy its present worth
Proclaims, as from the dying to the dying—
"Seize, clasp your hour of sun upon the earth!"
Then never dream that fire or beauty stays
More than one April moment in its flight
Toward regions where the sea-drift of all days
Sinks in a vast, desireless, lonely night.
What are eternal vows!—oh, give me breath
Of one white hour here on the marge of death!

## XII

### SPRING LANDSCAPE

Take you my brushes, child of light, and lay
Your colors on the canvas as you choose:—
Paint me the soft glow of this crystal day;
My harder touch would grasp them but to lose
The rose-hung veils, the liquid golden flood,—
I who with palette-knife must pry and strain
To wrench from attitude, face, figure, mood,
A living soul and limn its riddle plain.
What need you teachings of my labored art?
The brush will serve your April winsomeness.
Yet . . . rather lay your head upon my heart—
Draw me to you in a supreme caress,—
That one day, as I paint some throat or hair,
Spring's whole delight bloom like a marvel there!

## XIII

### VIEW FROM HEIGHTS

I am in love with high far-seeing places
That look on plains half-sunlight and half-storm,—
In love with hours when from the circling faces
Veils pass, and laughing fellowship glows warm.
You who look on me with grave eyes where rapture
And April love of living burn confessed—
The gods are good! The world lies free to capture!
Life has no walls. O take me to your breast!
Take me,—be with me for a moment's span!—
I am in love with all unveilèd faces.
I seek the wonder at the heart of man;
I would go up to the far-seeing places.
While youth is ours, turn to me for a space
The marvel of your rapture-lighted face!

## XIV

### SUMMONS

Ah, life is good! and good thus to behold
From far horizons where their tents are furled
The mighty storms of Being rise, unfold,
Mix, strike, and crash across a shaken world:—
Good to behold their trailing rearguards pass,
And feel the sun renewed its sweetness send
Down to the sparkling leaf-blades of the grass,
And watch the drops fall where the branches bend.
I think today I almost were content
To hear some bard life's epic story tell,—
To view the stage through some small curtain-rent,
Mere watcher at this gorgeous spectacle.
But now the curtain lifts:—my soul's swift powers
Rise robed and crowned—for lo! the play is ours!

XV

THE MEADOW

Joy, like a faun, her beautiful young head
Lifted from out the couches of the grass
Where, but a moment since, pursued you fled;
And smiled to hear your tripping footfall pass.
For two passed by,—into the meadows gleaming
With evening light across an amber stream.
O Sweet! I marvel now, with all our dreaming,
To find the sweetness sweeter than our dream.
Now we return; and Joy amid her grasses
Follows our steps with soft and curious eyes,
Smiling to see, as your light figure passes,
Your hand that in my hand so quiet lies.
Wide laughing light across the fields is shed . . .
Gravely Joy bends her beautiful young head.

## XVI

### TROPICAL TEMPEST

I have seen beauty where light stabs the hills
Gold-shafted through a cloud of rosy stain.
I have known splendor where the summer spills
Its tropic wildness of torrential rain.
I have felt all the free young dominance
Of winds that walk the mountains in delight
To tear the tree-trunks from their rooted stance
And make the gorges thunderous of their might.
The light, the torrents, and the winds, in you
I thought I had perceived to kinship grown.
It was a dream. Until this hour, I knew
Nothing—nay, nothing all my days have known
Where storm and cloud and sunlight held such part
As when you came, and swept me to your heart.

XVII

## REVELATION

It was the night, the night of all my dreams.
Across the lofty spaces of that room
You stole; and where the moonlight's silver streams
Cloudily slanted in upon the gloom,
More silver radiance met them where you moved;
And all the beauty of the hazèd west,
Wherein the moon was sinking, lay approved
Because thus lay your pale, slow-curving breast.
I shall remember,—aye, when death must cover
My soul and body with its rayless tide,—
The madness and the peace of that wild lover
Drunken with life's whole wonder at your side.
I shall remember in life's stormiest deep,—
Even as that night I knew you there in sleep.

XVIII

ORATORIO

O rare and holy, O taper lit for me
Before vast altars in the lonely dark,—
Without your gleam, dim were my soul to see
Where in star-spaces, imperial and stark
And sacrosanct, his ancient thronèd reign
God holds o'er stars and swallows as of yore;
Up through his Gothic vault I yearned in vain
And turned back baffled from him evermore.
In secular joys I must interpret heaven;
In ecstasies profane I must embrace
His glory,—seek in revels lightning-riven
All I shall ever witness of his face,—
And in wild flight, with passion winged and shod,
Circle and beat the citadel of God.

## XIX

### THE VIOLIN

The entrails of a cat,—some rusty wood,—
Certain pegs, pins, in curious manner bent,—
These yield the spirit in its singing mood
The one supreme heaven-scaling instrument.
And I, who rate man's clay not overmuch,
Marvel not more when from the bow-swept strings
Celestial music soars, than when we touch
From mortal flesh strains of immortal things.
To worlds beyond the world of its resort
The viol uplifts its ecstasy or despair.—
O love, who knows what white Hyperian court
Welcomes our spirits, through the cloven air
Rising, beyond the instrument set free
On the wild wings of unloosed melody?

## XX

### POSSESSION

Today, grown rich with what I late have won,
Across the dusk I reach my hand to you.
Cold as a leaf long pillowed on a stone
Your hand takes mine, like something strange and new.
So soon grown careless? . . . No, for in your eyes
A tenderness still lives, half-shy, half-bold . . .
Then sudden wisdom to my trouble cries:
I know you still my love, but not the old.
That which I loved and won now all is gone;
She was an hour, a moment, a swift mood,—
Vanished forever into deeps unknown,—
And a new creature rules your brain and blood.
Yesterday you were mine, beloved and fair.
Today I seek,—another love is there.

## XXI

### LIBERTY

There stretch between us wonder-woven bonds,
Fine as a thread but strong as braided steel,—
A link that to each changing need responds,
Nor binds the butterfly upon the wheel.
For the coarse bondage sanctioned of men's law
I would not, though I could, these gossamers change,—
Give time and circumstance that leave to draw
Closer the net till nearness must estrange!
And yet a longing restless in me burns
To lock what never might the lock endure:—
As a glad sailor, sea-impassioned, yearns
That what he loves for being unsure, were sure,—
That the fierce doubtful splendor of bright foam
Might somehow, fierce and doubtful, light him home!

## XXII

### SOME DAY

I see the days stretch out in wavering line
Toward that sure day when we shall lie in mould.
What fate, I wonder, sordid or divine,
Within their close-shut hands for us they hold?
We have walked with the winds in chasmy places,
And been as birds down sea-born tempests flung,—
Seen joy and wonder on each other's faces,
And learned that life is maddening still, and young.
Will the slow days cancel,—or reconcile,—
These with more sober meanings that they bring?
Shall we part bitter, or with humorous smile,
Or with heart-rent tragic remembering?—
Or sink in friendship, each a tired guest
Who finds the dreamless fireside slumber best?

## XXIII

### AT THE DANCE

Now jewelled, alight, you lead the midnight dances.
A thousand eyes, a hundred hearts are yours.
In the great hall, the splendor of your glances
With beauty's secret promise lights and lures.
They flock to you; you smile; they press around you
And crave your favors each with satyr smile.
Does your look lie, or do they truly sound you
With flatteries that your warming heart beguile?
See—the low lustful thinly maskèd faces!
They crowd about you, drinking in your bloom.
In fancy, each a taxi calls, and races
With you to his own Sybaritic room. . . .
I sit alone beneath my desk-lamp's glare,
Cursing the fate that made you mine, and fair.

## XXIV

### SIDONIAN

You are unworthy any man's desires.
I do suspect you of a thousand ills—
For little moths setting your little fires—
Haughty to high, servient to baser wills.
Rank! that the meanest prancer in your train
Can stir with languid love of lure your mood.
Is it your weak pleasure, or his weaker pain,
That gives sweet sustenance in this poor food?
You have seen visions of high luminous dawn
Coming to work a mircle in your heart:—
But now are veils across your watching drawn
Lest faith in viewless wonders plague your art. . . .
This light vain woman! What fit lash it were
Could I reveal the dream I held of her!

## XXV

### THE RIVAL

What is he but a common gutter-cur,
A chattering mountebank, obese and base?
And yet perhaps your judgment may prefer
His grinning to my thin and furrowed face.
My rival! . . . How the word burns on my lips!—
Acknowledging equality, in that breath,
With him who is my equal but where slips
All form from life, and men are one in death.
He is with you now:—what words now from him fall?
What answering smile lights your alluring eyes?
Madness leers at me, as my thoughts recall
The love that late between us cried—and cries! . . .
Well, go! My mirth goes with you, who might be
A lamp of earth, a bright star from the sea.

XXVI

LIGHTNING-FLASH

You are not peace, you are not happiness;
I look not on you with content or trust;
Nor is there in you aught with power to bless
Or heal my spirit weary of life's dust.
No, you are that which, on a leaden day,
As endless clouds sluggish with rain pass by,
Leaps brilliant once across the sullen grey,
A vivid lightning-gleam in that dead sky.
And I, whose days of sun or cloud have grown
Changelessly furled in one grey monstrous pall,—
I thirst for fierce lights, triumphs, trumpets blown,
And you, most wild and passionate of all,—
You, the bright madness lightening the curse
Of reason's dull reign in the universe.

## XXVII

### SURRENDER

Today put by the tumult of our wars,
Where,—strangely sexless in that struggle,—vie
Our spirits, meeting mid the armored jars,
Eager to thwart, to torture, to defy.
Our souls were born for hostile dalliance.
And you, if onslaught of your malice fail,
Abase yourself, fain in my wounded glance
To read exultant that your stings prevail.
And yet, today, bar me not from my own.
Now I yield all surrender that is yours.
For we are weary; and, each one alone,
We front a world whose loneliness endures.
And there seem hours when o'er an evening deep
We might drift home. . . . I knew not you could
weep!

## XXVIII

### SUMMER AFTERNOON

Fields far below us,—silence in the wood,—
Gold slanting rays down through green branches shed,—
You, clear against the hazy golden flood,—
And in your voice the summer as you said;
"I loved you once because a dream had come
Of what you might be,—and that was not you.
And once I hated, since my heart was numb
With pain to know my perfect hope untrue.
And once to make you other than you were
I would have mounted Calvary on bent knees.
But now,—dear lover whom such tempests stir,—
I am forever done with all of these.
My love is yours:—be tender, fierce, or strange,—
You still are you, unchanged through every change."

## XXIX

### HOMEWARD

I have not brought you asphodel, or laid
Before you any pearl of happy prize.
We have been as great eagles, unafraid
Circling and grappling through tremendous skies.
But evening closes; and the tired wing
Slants downward in slow earth-approaching flight.
Over the regions of our voyaging
Are drawn the holy curtains of the night.
O weary one! O pitiful waif of space!
Here gleams the haven to our troubled quest;
This is the land sought of your yearning face;
This is the house dreamed of my lonely breast.
We who have known all agonies and all bliss,—
Can it then be we shall know happiness?

## XXX

### CONFESSIONAL

Now, O beloved, in this pausing hour,
When peace, like a great river's twilight flow,
Isles us about from every alien power,
And all that hearts can know at last we know,—
Now let me speak words that within my breast
Have long, too long, dim to your passing view
Lain darkling, by a thousand storms oppressed,—
Now let me speak my holy love of you.
The topless peaks, the pure unclouded skies
That dwell remote within your spirit furled
I have not sung; and yet they filled my eyes,
Or how else had I sought you through the world?
My humors and my madness, fierce or cold,
I have told you all: my love I have not told.

## XXXI

### ON DRIFTING WINGS

Through vales of Thrace, Peneus' stream is flowing
Past legend-peopled hillsides to the deep;
From Paestum's rose-hung plains soft winds are
blowing;
The halls of Amber lie in haunted sleep;
The Cornish sea is silent with the summer
That once bore Iseult from the Irish shore;
And lovely lone Fiesole is dumber
Than when Lorenzo's garland-guests it wore.
This eve for us the emerald clearness glowing
Over the stream, where late was ruddy might,
Whispers a wonder, dumb to other knowing,—
Known but to you, the silence, and the night.
Our boat drifts breathless; the last light is dying;
Stars, dawn, shall find us here together lying.

## XXXII

### INDIAN SUMMER

Low suns and moons, long days and spacious nights,
With majesty move by us; and in state,
Like buskined actors treading tragic heights,
Enlarge the measure of our common fate.
Across the great gold-hazèd afternoon
Drifts deeper meaning than our thought can prove;
And happy dusks and happy dawns too soon
Beyond our sight in calm procession move.
Dear, hospitable, grows the murmuring earth;
As lords at home,—masters returned from wars,—
Rule we this realm whose summer-thronèd worth
Admits no craving for the distant stars.
Close suns and moons, wide nights and spacious
days,—
The Gods once sojourned in these earthly ways!

## XXXIII

### THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE

I held no trust in this, that it should last!
Of no malignant fates stand I the sport.
If any memory plague me with the past,
I of most clear foreknowledge make retort.
What are the powers that at earth's center live
That such a dream as ours they should permit?
Why, Heaven itself would have no more to give
If Hell allow we should not wake from it!
Dreaming, I saw beyond the curtained dream,—
Half-conscious ever of the stubborn day
Waiting to smite our turrets, high a-gleam,
With armored siege of hurtling ray on ray.—
What would you have, dear lady?—who, for love,
Did ask the world that from its course it move?

## XXXIV

### THE ALARM

Well, now they know! The world's malicious arms
Like snakes stretch out, like pistons batter down.
Toward us the missiles of a thousand harms
Are sped; our names delight the leering town.
Corrupt Don Juans of the midnight mart
To their lean spouses mouth our infamy.
Wantons—whose sins, of flesh and not of heart,
Leave them unscathed—prove virtue, passing by.
Could we but flee the world's whole vile intent!
Might we but face it—bid it do its worst!
Yet vain the flight, and vain the argument.
For the world's baseness are we made accursed.
O love, bow down! Weep for the people's sin!
The world, the flesh, the devil, always win!

## XXXV

### LAST STAND

What! shall all thwartings of malignant chance
Set any bar to this impassioned trust?
I will assail these gates of circumstance
And break their iron hinges to the dust.
Nay! are you pallid in the eye of the sun?
Do cold winds blow you from the midmost fire?
Or does the journey ere 'tis well begun
Speak with less eager lure to your desire? . . .
Your look corrodes the metal of my heart. . . .
Are we then tainted with a pallid cast
Of ghostly moonlight? All the foes that start
From ambush do not fright me as this last,
This sudden web of weakness round us grown. . . .
One gate we cannot storm. It is our own. . . .

## XXXVI

### RETURN FROM CYTHEREA

You will go back,—because he bids you come
And stand with him to prove the tales untrue,—
Until at last the whispers shall grow dumb,
And men forget the thing they guessed or knew.
And as the folly of an hour, at most,
Our love shall be remembered down the years—
A brightness dust-obscured, a vision lost,
Shall be the secret of our passionate tears.
To him,—I seem a rogue who half-succeeded,
And you, frail beauty almost led astray.
All the fierce splendor that our spirits needed
Already fades, a ghost of yesterday.
Well then, go back! Be a good wife and true.
What can you say to me, or I to you?

## XXXVII

### CLANGED ECHOES

Last night I kissed you with a brutal might
Whereof clanged echoes hunt me from my rest.
And bitter on my lips that fierce delight
Lingers, and bitter the pressure of your breast.
I am shaken, still, by the tumult of that hour
Before the dawn, when in some traitor-mood
You, upon whom love's beauty kept no power,
Lay vanquished by love's sensual habitude.
And ere the cock-crow you denied us thrice,
Being sure that all our daring dreams had lied.
Like an arc of fire then leaped my sacrifice,
My kiss of hate on the lips that had denied,—
A gift of the flesh, since the soul you dared not meet. . . .
And I longed that my kiss should strike you dead at my feet.

XXXVIII

THE POTTER

Then go. I do not want you. It is over.
The flickerings of our dream have had their day.
Imagine now that he who was your lover
Has sunk in drink, or died, or moved away.
And all that flamed between us once is older
Than hopes that died before our lives began.
Summer is done for us; the dusks grow colder;
We are not gods, but futile woman and man.
With ineffectual will and dazzled eyes
We sought a faith beyond our power to make. . . .
The potter, as the dizzying swift wheel flies,
Must guard his spirit lest his fingers shake
And the vase lie in ruin. . . . It is over,—
Potter, and pot, and bad clay, and weak lover.

XXXIX

TESTAMENT

Friends, when I die,—you who were friends indeed,—
Looking upon the tarnished fame whose blind
And battered mirror I shall leave behind,—
When to defend your love you have sore need,
Say then:—"He strove a little in his youth
Along the measured ways the world calls fair;
And in good time he could have triumphed there
In open honor and unclouded truth.
But life confounded him; life, far too great
For measured ways, insistent at his ears
Played its wild symphony of laughter, tears,
Desires, defeats, and undiscovered fate;
And he went down, still doubtful of his goal
But still a-dream with it—seeking his soul."

## XL

### RETROSPECT

I have divested my dim spirit now
Of its great ornament, and bid go by
Beyond the call of any prayer or vow
The star so long the center of my sky.
Void, grey and limitless, now lies ahead—
Where my strange orbit, circling on alone,
Through regions of the living or the dead
May find wide gulfs that shall for light atone.—
Wide gulfs, bleak darkness, iron ecstasy
Amid my blind and frozen fellow-stars!—
Some flight of more than human history,
Some peace more terrible than all life's wars,
Some undiscovered depth of ancient night!—
But never you, never again the light.

## XLI

### VISION OF BEATRICE

What Beatrice was, so much you are
To me now wandering with an exile's eyes
In regions whence no road to paradise
Mounts, and the solace glimmers of no star.
There stretch between us gulfs of many a war;
The ancient hills to sunder us arise.
And yet I crave, from Fate that all denies,
You near in dream, who are in truth so far. . . .
"Though all the powers that thwart your life and
mine
Thereto consent, yet can I never be
Your Beatrice. I can never shine
Pale, starry in your heaven; nay, unto me
One lot alone my stormy fates assign—
To leave you,—or to clasp you utterly!"

## XLII

### LOST SUMMER

I needs must know that in the days to come
No child that from our Summer sprang shall be
To give our voices when the lips are dumb
That lingering breath of immortality.
Nay, all our longing compassed not such hope,
Nor did we, in our flame-shot passagings,
Push the horizon of our visions' scope
To regions of these far entangled things.
I knew not such desire. But now I know.—
O perfect body! O wild soul a-flower!
We, wholly kindled by life's whitest glow,
Turned barren from our life-commanding hour. . . .
Now while I dream, sweetness of that desire
Lies on my heart like veils of parching fire. . . .

## XLIII

### REINCARNATION

What if some lover in a far-off Spring,
Down the long passage of a hundred years,
Should breathe his longing through the words I sing—
And close the book, dazed by a woman's tears?
Does it mean aught to you that such might be? . . .
Ah! we far-seekers! . . . Solely thus were proved
From dream to deed the souls of you and me:—
Thus only were it real that we had loved.
Grey ghosts blown down the desolate moors of time!
Poor wanderers, lost to any hope of rest!
Joined by the measure of a faltering rhyme!
Sundered by deep division of the breast!—
Sundered by all wherein we both have part;
Joined by the far-world seeking of each heart.

## XLIV

### MOON-ARCHERY

This is a record of what has not been,
Is not, and never while time lasts can be.
It is a tale of lights down rain-gusts seen,—
Of midnight argent mad moon-archery.
Ah, life that vexes all men plagued us most!
And made us motes in winds that blew from far,—
Credulous of the whispers of a ghost,—
Fain of the light of some long-quenchèd star.
What were you that I loved you? What was I
That I perturbed you? Shapes of restless sleep!
A shadow from a cloud that hurried by,—
A ripple of great powers that stirred the deep.
And we, too supple for life's storms to break,
Writhed at a dream's touch, for a shadow's sake!

## XLV

### NOVEMBER DUSK

There are strange shadows fostered of the moon,
More numerous than the clear-cut shade of day. . . .
Go forth, when all the leaves whisper of June,
Into the dusk of swooping bats at play,—
Or go into that late November dusk
When hills take on the noble lines of death,
And on the air the faint astringent musk
Of rotting leaves pours vaguely troubling breath.—
Then shall you see shadows whereof the sun
Knows nothing,—aye, a thousand shadows there
Shall leap and flicker and stir and stay and run,
Like petrels of the changing foul or fair,—
Like ghosts of twilight, of the moon, of him
Whose homeland lies past each horizon's rim. . . .

## XLVI

### THE TORRENT

The clouds that steal across the sun of June
Are swift; and out of them the sun comes free.
The mists that drift beneath the flying moon
Reveal new brightness of her wizardry.
Not so the shadows that on the spirit fall,
Moving like torrents that wind the mountain-steep.
Down from the slopes they bear beyond recall
Earth and flowers; their pathway is graven deep.
They wear the iron rock; they change the hills;
The slopes are torn; the peaks fall; the vales flood wide.
And when the waters cease, and sound of rills
Remains, the battle's echo, down the mountain-side,
Passers-by shall marvel, in far-off days—
"Here lie forever the torrent's ancient ways!"

## XLVII

### WINTER WINDS

Across the shaken bastions of the year
March drives his windy chariot-wheels of cold.
Somewhere, they tell me, Spring is waiting near . . .
But all my heart is with things grey and old:—
Reliques of other Aprils, that are blown
Recklessly up and down the barren earth;
Mine the dull grasses by the Winter mown,
And the chill echoes of forgotten mirth.
Spring comes, but not for me. I know the sign
And feel it alien. I am of an age
That passes. All the blossoms that were mine
Lie trampled now beneath December's rage.
Ye children of the Spring, may life be sweet!
For me, the world crumbles beneath my feet.

XLVIII

## A MAN'S CASTLE

Drawn are the curtains, for the day is done.
Over this garden silence now is spread.
In the unequal contest, night has won;
Love and the days of loving both are dead.
But raised above the abysses of the gloom
That make my garden like a lair of night,
I hold the lonely ramparts of this room,
I stoop before the hearth, I kindle light,
And in a moment foster its small blaze
Into keen splendor. The chaotic sky
Sucks up the stored warmth of the summer days
Into its wastes of dumb infinity,
But cannot wring my prayers or plot my fall
Where here I guard my flame against them all.

## XLIX

### THE TIDINGS

They brought me tidings; and I did not hear
More than a fragment of the words they said.
Their further speech died dull upon my ear;
For my rapt spirit otherwhere had fled—
Fled unto you in other times and places.
Old memories winged about me in glad flight.
I saw your lips of longing and delight,—
Your grave glad eyes beyond their chattering faces.
I saw a world where you have been to me
More than the sun, more than the wakening wind.
I saw a brightness that they could not see.
And yet I seemed as smitten deaf and blind.
I heard but fragments of the words they said.
Life wanes. The sunlight darkens. You are dead.

## L

### ECHOES OF SILENCE

Out of the dusk into whose gloom you went,
Answer me, tell me, why you chose to go?
Why did you seek that far-strewn firmament?
Was loneliness not keen enough below?
Did some old wrong affright you? Some new ill?
Did one more bloom that lured you turn to dust?
What spur could goad that lovely weary will,
What hopeless calm, what storm of shaken trust?
Across the giant waste of this unknown
Must I forever send my questionings?
Had you no word to leave me for my own
Before you went? Must my imaginings
Deem you forgot?—Or did your heart foretell
That time's whole later hush would speak farewell?

## LI

### THE METEOR

Now from the living fountains of my thought
Spring streams of comfort, crystalline and mild,
To cool the wound the sudden stroke has wrought
And bid my heart in peace be reconciled.
My spirit whispers—"From this meteor flown,
Draw knowledge of the stars, now all is done.
Assign it station in some system known,
Part of the ordered brightness round the sun."
Good counsel!—reconcile, transmute, remould
To earth's conglomerate mass this unconfined
Pilgrim of sky,—or label it, grown cold,
To edify a chaos-fearing mind? . . .
Love, love, I keep memorial of you! Nay!—
Unsolved, bright, lonely, till my Judgment Day!

# DON QUIXOTE

TO WITTER BYNNER

I

THEY told Don Quixote he was old and dazed,
Ill-born, a pauper, not a knight at all,
A thing to make the very crows amazed
With the grotesqueness of his spectacle.
I think his words of answer spoke but part
Of his defence against the worldly crew;
I think great lights were flashing in his heart
Whereof he told not, and they never knew.
I think he saw all that they saw and more—
The gaunt and tattered knight, the sorry frame;
But cared not, knowing that his bosom bore
The living embers of a vanished flame,
And that his memory guarded now alone
The history of a beauty that was gone.

II

"However," said the Bachelor Carrasco,
"Some souls there be, reading your history,
Who wish the author had not numbered so
The bafflements that were your misery
And foil, most noble knight!" But Sancho, wise,
Spoke that thick candor which is half his zest:
"In these falls lies the history; all were lies
With these left out; and truth, gadzooks, is best!"
"Aye, truth to mortal eyes!" the old knight said,
"But such a truth might well have been let go.
Things that light not the living nor the dead
Are of small profit for our brains to know.
Prove that the real Æneas was a knave,
And have you then stirred Virgil in his grave?"

III

Don Quixote died a sane man; at his bed
The curate and the barber marvelling stood,
Admiring his new wisdom as he said
Clear words, abjuring in his dying mood
All of the far adventurings, cursing all
The old enchantments, casting out all fays
Of mad romances that had sounded call
So clarion-like to his knight-errant days.
Thus drew the high strange tragedy to its close;
Thus the great dupe and dreamer ebbed, was gone.
Madmen end ill, as everybody knows;
The barber and the curate, they lived on.
Poor knight! God viewed thee with a jealous eye
Since mad and great He would not let thee die.

IV

Dearest of all the heroes! Peerless knight
Whose follies sprang from such a generous blood!
Young, young must be the heart that in thy fight
Beholds no trace of its own servitude.
Young, or else darkened, is the eye that sees
No image of its own fate in thy quest.
The windmills and the swine,—by such as these
Is shaped the doom of those we love the best.
Beloved knight! La Mancha's windows gleam,
Across the plain time makes so chill and grey,
With thy light only. Still thy flambeaux stream
In pomp of one who on his destined day
Put up his spear, his knightly pennon furled,
And died of the unworthiness of the world.

V

Great ghost! who in the autumn of the year,
When through gaunt branches terrible winds that
blow
Seem whispering to us, seem more close and dear
Than all the human voices that we know—
Great ghost! who loved uncomprehended space
And were so fevered with immortal time,
Who dreamed that heaven lit up one chosen face,
And trusted fantasies crowded into rhyme—
Be not too far from us; come, at the pane
Flatten your pale face and look in on us:
We also are of those who live in vain;
Like you we are noble and ridiculous;
Like you we haunt a savage autumn night
In dizzy errantries of lonely flight.

# RUE DES VENTS

TO MAURICE BROWNE

I

IT was an old house; and there seemed to live
Along its mousey corridors still a gloom
Of lives long-cancelled. In my quiet room
Among my books, I could hear fugitive
Hesitant faint intrusions that withdrew
Before they had entered to my presence there.
The very light was thick, and on the stair
The darkness glowed and flickered. So I knew
I was at home here; for on every side
Beyond these walls life to me thus had seemed
Always a hush where ancient voices hide—
A dusk where candles had but lately gleamed—
A masque of those who went and us who bide—
A dream that many another ghost has dreamed.

II

Here in the quiet chambers that I love
Evening falls gently; from the garden, cries
Of laughing children float; and high above
The old roofs, toward the western glow, there flies
A swallow from the south thus early come
To seek a summer that is still a dream.
The chestnut buds to woolly pods have grown
Green-lit beyond the window where I lean.
Summer is singing, and the night is still
With listening to that song; I too, oppressed
By some old faith in beauty, yield my will
To that which lights the gold lights of the west,—
And long for summer though it come again
With dreams of beauty and with proof of pain.

III

This is the dusk-hour when for old love's sake
Ghosts in this garden might arise and move
Down vanished paths, and memories might awake
Out of the death that is so chill to love.
You whose old sins have in the later time
Become a legend perilous and sweet
With tragic whisperings of courtly rhyme,—
Lovely dead chatelaine!—are these your feet
That now across my silence slowly pace
Thrilling the darkness of this garden-close?
Turn! . . . No, this is no golden harlot's face,—
This is the bud that is not yet the rose,
This is a ghost of things that never were,
This is a child. The dusk grows sweet with her.

IV

Be wise, be wise, O heart forever seeking
A wine whose fever must the goblet break!
Let now the Sleeping Beauty lie a-sleeping;
Her lips could not speak sweeter did she wake.
Her dreams may last some happy moments still
Before the dawn's first resonance of grey
Shall stir the east and, growing swiftly, fill
Her soul with joy and terror of the day.
Yet as the Sleeper lifts her quiet eyes
And to my troubled gaze their laughing glow
With loveliness and love of love replies,
I know that she has dreamed more than I know—
And lights outshining wisdom flush and start,
And summer sweeps wild wings across my heart.

V

Psyche! whose fairness of the rain-swept brow
And delicate breast and smooth unquiet hair
So long have filled my dreams,—what wonder now
That I again come and again find fair
The curve and color of these vestments worn
In mortal semblance for a little while?
Out of the far isles of the past reborn
You still keep, as in marble, this dim smile—
And I, the recurrent mortal lover, follow
Your pale recurrent dream of youthful love,
And seek as seeks in April's track the swallow
To trail your secret footsteps as you move;
Even like the swallow little knowing why
Your look should light the earth and flush the sky.

VI

This day is all a greyness of dim rain.
Earth and the sky alike are wrapped in fold
Of the dim memory of some ancient pain,
Some wrong of bitter gods endured of old;
All grey and spent, save where I see you move
With lifted golden head and laughing eyes
And breast so delicate that no power but love
Could dwell there with his singing sorceries.
Proud little head, lifted amid the gloom!
Gay serious little heart, swift-running feet!
Into the shadowed broodings of this room
You bring the light of regions far and sweet;
Your laughter is a song, a golden beam
Out of the western rain-mist of my dream.

VII

When round you falls the silence of the dark,
Then golden caravels on magic seas
From you as from the world's edge might embark
To lands of light and isles of mysteries.
As on the slow tide of the violin
It seems that from the cool slope of your breast
My drowsed and gliding spirit's dreams might win
To unimagined silence of the west—
That beauty might so hush and daze the night
Love could transcend the bosom whence it sprang,
And fading on horizons of far flight
The song forget the summer lips that sang,
And into an undying summer soar
Where cloud and sky are one with sea and shore.

VIII

Your body's beauty is an air that blows
Out of some garden where the Spring has come—
Where never yet has faded any rose
And never any singing bird is dumb.
You are white waterfalls in piney woods
Touched by the freshness of October wind.
You are the slim young silver moon that broods
Over a dusk where lovers wander blind.
And how shall these eyes ever have their fill
Of you, alight with loveliness and love—
My starlight water, tremulous or still,
Across which music wakens as you move!
Over the floor laughing and white you pass. . . .
I see all April light that ever was.

IX

When the mad tempest of the blood has died
And sleep comes on, still I am half aware
Of the long sloping music of your side,
And windy light is round me with your hair.
I move through dusks between the day and night
Where night and day and vision intertwine;
The breast of Her who was the gods' delight
Touches a cheek I vaguely know is mine.
Doubt and believing mingle while there stirs
Your hand that wakens mine out of its dream;
Hope knows not what is hers, nor Memory hers,
Amid the marble curves that change and stream;
And only Beauty, through dim lights, can claim
These hours that have no time or place or name.

X

O happy heart, O heart of loveliness!
Against the morning you lift up your face,
And smile against the morning's smile, no less
Beautiful than her beauty; and the grace
Of her long-limbed and sweet processional hours
Is but attendant on your morning laughter.
Trailing her wreaths and scattering her flowers,
Where your light footsteps go, she follows after—
Follows your feet with sunlight. . . . Till we are
Silent again and lonely, where there rise
Dark evening trees, over them one great star,
While other stars come slowly to the skies —
And hand in hand, where the world goes to rest
I am lost in wonder, and silent is your breast.

XI

Your beauty shall not save you from despair
In after-days when life is not so sweet
Along the garden-paths. That you were fair
And well-belovèd, can it ease your feet
Down through the dark upon whose edge I stand
And see the shadows deepening on ahead
Even to the borders of the empty land
Where beauty ends and all the dreams are dead?
Child! drink the sunlight of this perfect hour
Which makes a slender blossom of your breast!
Time has gone dreaming, that your heart may flower;
And while he sleeps, be happy. That is best;
And laugh in triumphing beauty, even at one
Who in each flower sees flowers that now are gone.

XII

Here at my window, in the waning light
Of afternoon, with serious bended head
You labor at a letter; as you write,
I wonder—can words say what should be said?
I wonder if the misspelled lines can hold
Anything of this rapt and dreaming face,
The delicate brow, the carven wavy gold,
The white neck bent in dim abstracted grace?
That lad in battle to whom your message flies—
I in my madness wish that he could share
This hour. No inky page of your replies
Could speak to him as speaks this gold-shot hair
To me who linger, near yet more afar
Than you, boy, can be, wheresoever you are.

XIII

Since beauty holds no lease of settled date,
And youth has tenure but while roses blow,
And mortal hope must yield to mortal fate,
And every dream that comes must one day go—
Since these most lovely phantoms cannot be
Companions in the grey years that confess
Wild love to hold life's chiefest sovereignty,
Yet must without it seek for happiness—
Then let the autumn of the soul become
Transfigured with its own appropriate hues;
As in high pageant, when the flowers are dumb,
Old forests lift the splendor earth must lose,
And hills with solemn foliage of the fall
Outvaunt the spring, in phantom festival.

XIV

Go by! but go not lightly; as you pass
Send back such gleam as the departing sun
Pours down the hill-slopes where the fading grass
Turns to a path of gold. The day is done
And evening stars come on. Yet you shall rise
Tomorrow to a world once more complete.
And green shall be the valleys to your eyes
And fair shall be the paths before your feet.
But as you tread your way across the earth,
Look back sometimes, belovèd, and recall
I taught you love and laughter at their worth;
And of the bitterness, I knew it all
And would have spared you, had the power been
mine . . .
Dreams, dreams again! There is no anodyne.

XV

Birds that are beautiful and sing in the sun
Fly southward when the summer day is done.
Oh may the fountains of the golden south
Be worthy of your delicate thirsting mouth!
Oh may the magic of the tropic isles
Where the great palm trees lift their tufted crests
Answer the light and music of your smiles
And may the waves curl gently round your breasts.
Southward as goes the swallow to the sun
May you go ever till the race be run—
And at the end, may Time whose terrible feet
With the swift splendor of your limbs compete,
May he be merciful, and just at the goal
Smite suddenly the beautiful body and soul.

# THE MIDDLE YEARS

TO EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

I

WOMEN in mirrors, I am told, may see
The wings of beauty as, with anxious eye,
They trace the legend of mortality
And day by day watch the old magic die.
In different wise, I in my glass behold
The flight of what no springtime can replace,
And start with terror of things grim and old
When chance confronts me with my mirrored face—
Where the long seasons have engraven deep
So many an epitaph of satiric rhyme
And sent so many a flaming light to sleep
And branded immortality so with time,
That where a stranger might see youth alone
I view the ghosts of things that now are gone.

II

This is the burden of the middle years:
To know what things can be, or not be, known;
To find no sunset lovely unto tears;
To pass not with the swallow southward-flown
Toward far Hesperides where gold seas break
Beyond the last horizon round strange isles;
To have forgot Prometheus on his peak;
To know that pilgrim-miles are only miles.
Then death seems not so dreadful with its night
That keeps unstirred a veil of mystery.
Then no acclaimed disaster can affright
Him who is wise in human history
And finds no godhead there to earn his praise
And dreads no horror save his empty days.

III

Not all my will can change this casque of bone
That predetermines what each thought must be;
And I have learned to bear with these my own
Enforced defects and doomed futility,
And with reproach no longer rack a skull
Whose rigid plan, conditioned long ago,
Left such low arches for the beautiful
To pour its summer light through. Now I know
Somewhat the measure of what may be done
And may not by this child of a dark race
Who in the long processions of the sun
Today for a brief moment takes his place.
I bid him bear his banner with the rest,
Nor too much blame the dusk that haunts his breast.

IV

I can more tranquilly behold the stars
Than once I could. Their alien majesty
Awakes in me no longer desperate wars
Against their far indifference circling by.
For I too have my orbit, and intent
Upon its rondure I no less than they
Decline the test of warlike argument.
They go their several ways; I go my way.
Nothing of all my hopes have they denied,
Nor do I storm against them as of old.
We pass, the sovereigns of an equal pride.
Some day shall I be dead and they be cold.
Until that hour, untroubled in our flight
We seek our own paths through the spacious night.

V

It thunders in the west, where the clouds roll
Ominously; and as the winds arise
Once more the lightnings cry out to my soul.
How often have I stood with passionate eyes
On some bare hilltop whence the miles of plain,
By sudden flashes torn forth from their sleep,
Were for an instant scrutable, till again
Atlantis-like they sank to oceans deep.
And such is life's true image: no clear day
On plain-lands luminous and defined and grave—
But a wild dusk where flashes, far away,
Swiftly illumine shores that from the wave
Are for a moment lifted, soon to be
Merged once again in the concealing sea.

VI

What good, I ask myself, what fortunate thing
Amid so many evils that we taste
Do these strange years of middle-passage bring
Where thief and rust and moth have so made waste?
And as I count them over one by one—
Patience and prudence and more generous thought—
I see none here to match the great gifts gone
Nor any fit atonement time has brought.
—Save perhaps one: the calm and certain will
Whose baffled purpose still relentless goes
Across the world, unconquerable still,
Seeking the unknown goal that well it knows—
Like a bleak eagle that with blinded eye
Drives on its way across the wind-swept sky.

# EPITAPH FOR THE POET V.

## [A HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY]

TO EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

I

IT is ordained,—or so Politian said,—
That he who by some dryad-haunted brook
Or silver bathing-pool or secret glade
Shall, wandering in the dusk, suddenly look
Upon a naked goddess at her bath,—
He from that hour leaves happiness behind,
And doomed to all the splendor of her wrath
Returns as did Teiresias, smitten blind:—
Blind to the common and decaying things,
Blind to the dying summer and the dust,
Blind to the crumpled wall, the broken wings,
The yellow leaf, the sword ruined with rust;
Blind, blind to all save the wild memory
Of Beauty naked against a stormy sky.

II

For Beauty kissed your lips when they were young
And touched them with Her fatal triumphing,
And Her old tune that long ago was sung
Beside your cradle haunts you when you sing.
Wherefore there is no light in any face
To win you from these memories as you roam;
Far though you seek, you shall not find a place
Wears the mysterious twilight-glow of home.
You are an exile to those lonely lands
Far out upon the world's forsaken rim
Where there is never touch of meeting hands,—
Always you must go on, through spaces dim,
Seeking a refuge you can never know—
Wild feet that go where none save Beauty's go!

III

Beauty—what is it? A perfume without name:
A sudden hush where clamor was before:
Across the darkness a faint ghost of flame:
A far sail, seen from a deserted shore.
Out of the dust and terror it can spring
And be, for us, all that there never was:
The sun lives only to illume Her wing
Which rises, hovers, soars, and soon must pass
Into high chaos once again. But now
While She still lingers round us in mad flight
We shall revive the vigor of our vow,
Assured that all our hopeless love was right,
And watch the wings that fade, pale, and are gone,
Knowing that they are life, and they alone.

IV

In Beauty's name, I love you. Life's grim story
Is swept with rainbow lights when you draw near.
A singular and inescapable glory
Comes from the sun when thoughts of you are here.
Your presence is not anything, or not much;
But when your dreams come whispering to my doors
I leave my crumbling house,—lift wing,—fly,—
clutch
Great battlements, and walk legendary floors. . . .
Poor dust! poor ignorant instrument of great powers
That through you blow their silver trumpet-cry!
How savage is this destiny of ours
That fashions music out of agony,
And lets us hear, across the iron night,
The wing-beats of each other's lonely flight!

V

Not till the temples of our secret trust
Are blown in mist across a rainy sky,
And music crumbles wholly into dust,
And carven marbles into silence die—
Not until what we dream and what we know
Are merged and made inseparably the same,
And beauty dead a thousand years ago
Ceases to haunt us with a living flame—
Not till the harvest of slow-ripening Time
Is brought in golden sheaves triumphant home
And planets round into the perfect rhyme
Of death after their million years aroam—
Not until then shall any strangeness move
From its fixed place the strangeness of our love.

VI

This is the deep security of our love—
The faith that neither, widowed, can survive
To view an earth where dreary pigmies move
Down paths where once the gods were so alive;
For we have made our compact out-of-time
And marked our passion with a fabled date
And had our banns inscribed in druid rhyme:
Unto our feast no guest shall come too late.
There is a music in the upper air
That shall deny to me if you are dead.
A summer wind will whisper in your hair
Though all except the name of me be fled. . . .
Ah, radiance of two spirits one must wear
When in the end the other bows his head!

VII

If you went out of this strange world tonight,—
This world of flesh that is the one I know,—
And joined the legends of our lost delight,
And were as dead as Helen, ages ago,—
It would be a dim world you left behind,
One without reason, and incredible.
I think that I should know how move the blind
Or the doomed souls who grope their way through hell.
And yet there is no heaven, to pay for this
Grim possibility that I dare to view.
You dead, I dead,—how would the other miss
The torture that I was, and that was you!
How would the lingerer love the other!—when
No one was left to make life mad again!

VIII

To us who are beyond all loves and wars,—
To us,—who keep no faithfulness of trust
In anything but sea-winds and wild stars
And horror and a sudden laugh and dust,—
The gifts that can be given are few and rare.
There are no jewels yet mined for me to set
Upon your haunted breast; and for your hair
The seas have made no fitting pearls, as yet.
But you,—one thing be still content to give
Where here I watch the dusks go down in fire:
A love of loving, far and fugitive,—
A faith in beauty and the heart's desire,—
A sudden sense of that which might befall
Could life be nothing and our dreams be all.

IX

I cry to you—and like a windy mist
My words go past you: it is well they do. . . .
Not any kiss that you or I have kissed
Loses or gains from what I bring to you. . . .
Not anything that life has ever told
Has whispered what I come to you to learn.
And a flame whiter than the arctic cold
Is what I speak of when I say—I burn! . . .
Go by, image! Go by, immortal dust!
It was your destiny to make manifest
The god again: unfathomable, your trust
Nurtured the deity at a virgin breast,
Holy, and lonely, and immaculate,—
And branded with your fate and with my fate.

X

We meet in lands of longing where there are
No jealousies to poison love's bright lips
With faith or with fidelity. Does a star
Secrete itself in shadows of eclipse
Save for one eye alone? Or must a wall
Shut in a garden from the general sun
Because one spirit, dearest of them all,
Walks there a dreaming hour when day is done?
Nay, with more certainty of love, we know
Nothing diminishes what is yours and mine;
As richer with all other loves you grow,
The dearer is your wealth that I divine;
All that enchants you is a golden glow—
Ripening the grapes of our communion-wine.

XI

Against mine eyes let your dreams beat their wings
Blindingly bright, as they so long have done.
And let the music that your bosom sings
Sing still to me: it sings to me alone.
Here in the murk and mystery of the earth,
Where strangers wed, and foemen dwell as friends,
And brothers cease their brotherhood at birth,
And who as son begins, as alien ends,—
Here send again those blinding dreams that come
Singing and crying out of your wild heart—
Let them to me, to only me, turn home—
For they are mine,—they are another part
Of my own soul, somehow afar and free—
Till your voice sings them dizzily back to me!

XII

Above the region of eternal snow,
Where on the ultimate icy granite peak
The sun shines always, and there always blow
Clear singing winds,—there might we stand and speak
Truly and tenderly. . . . We have moved apart
Ever from the confusions of the earth:
We have been acquiescent, with half a heart,
To those necessities which gave us birth,—
But we have honored or believed them never. . . .
—Is it that we were dream-befooled, or wise?
Were we too dull, or too perversely clever?
Was it conceit or wisdom sealed our eyes? . . .
What we have sought,—is it a quickening light,
Or but the aurora of an Arctic night?

XIII

Thanks to our happy fate, we two shall meet
Never more humanly than heretofore.
No enmity of chance shall guide our feet
Down paths of dreaming toward one twilight door.
For in that little room there were no place
For the great promise that we two have made
Of marvelous glow upon each other's face:
We should be lonely there, and half-afraid.
There, if we met, two Titans would arise
Between our breasts, passionate to proclaim
We were but strangers to each other's eyes—
Bleak ghosts without a fragrance or a name—
Pale wicks that sent once a preposterous light
Of lying signal through the hollow night.

XIV

In parable alone we speak the truth
And in the interludes of a troubled dream,
On this wide platform between age and youth,
And name as nothing all the things that seem. . . .
—A swamp of violets stretches from my feet
To an horizon violet-hued with dawn.—
And need you say that loveliness is sweet,
Or need I say that all the best is gone? . . .
As actor, liar, prophetess, and child
You cross in curious paths the mortal plain
Where to be virtuous is to be defiled,
Where to be happy is to drown in pain,—
Where home is in the bosom of the wild,—
And to have loved is to have loved in vain.

XV

In times hereafter, when there shall be told,
To light man's legend with heroic glory,
The chronicle of the famous loves of old,
Enriching with their passion life's bleak story,—
Of some shall be recounted sacrifice,
Or courage, or how pitifully they died,
Or what tumultuous madness swept their eyes. . . .
But us let Time remember for our pride.
Let men hereafter know, that never two
Did with serener arrogance bend their glance
Downward upon the human world they knew
And cut the knots of mortal circumstance
And turn to worlds where only shadows move,
Their faces lit with the great pride of their love.

XVI

And these shall be an elegy for you,—
These groping syllables out of many years,
Mixed of things felt or dreamed, things false or true.
No one shall guess what mockery or tears
Or pitying smiles or dizzy lighted eyes
Between us made communion, or if dumb
Our lips were . . . There are certain destinies
That have a home beyond what men call home. . . .
But if you should survive me, come, some day,
To where, not knowing anything, I shall lie—
And look down at the stupid mound of clay,
And look up at the splendor of blue sky,—
And know that neither you nor I could know
All that our love meant to us, long ago.

XVII

Peculiar ghost!—great and immortal ghost! . . .
How many generations before mine
Have you not haunted? . . . I shall join the host
Of those who, when Proserpina's dark wine
Touches their lips, forget the haze they knew—
The years when—tortured, heaven-dreaming men—
They trusted sleep, the beautiful and true. . . .
We shall forget our need of sleeping, then!
Everything left behind us like a dream
Shall into an ambiguous darkness fade.
Safe, safe at last, beyond the fatal stream,
Upon our brains oblivion shall be laid. . . .
You will be waiting, on that silent shore;
And we shall speak. We never spoke before.

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